

IIIA. State Overview

Washington State encompasses over 66,000 square miles of the northwest corner of the United States. It is bordered north and south by British Columbia and Oregon, east and west by Idaho and the Pacific Ocean. The Cascade Mountains divide the state into distinct climatic areas. Western Washington, sandwiched between the Pacific Ocean and the Cascades, has an abundance of rain. The geographically larger area east (and in the rain shadow) of the Cascades is much dryer.

While the average population density in the state in 2000 was similar to the national rate at 88.5 persons per square mile, nearly 80 percent of Washington's population is concentrated west of the Cascades. The three most populous counties, King, Pierce, and Snohomish are located on and prosper from Puget Sound. Another western county, Clark, gains economically from proximity to Portland, Oregon, while the city of Spokane and Spokane County in Eastern Washington, are near enough to benefit from Coeur d'Alene, Idaho.

Geography, climate, and economic resources influence Washington's population distribution. Population density ranges from 817 persons per square mile in King County to 3 persons per square mile in Garfield and Ferry counties.(1) Washington has 39 counties, each with its own local government. These counties form 35 independent Local Health Jurisdictions (LHJs), funded with varying amounts of federal, state, and local dollars.

Population Density(2)

(See attached map)

Economy

Washington State continues to struggle with an economic slowdown resulting from a combination of factors. The burst dot.com bubble and the decline of airplane demand after September 11, 2001 significantly affected Washington's technical and industrial economic base. In addition, the first case of bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE or "mad cow disease") was found in Mabton, Washington in November 2003. This resulted in economic challenges for Washington's beef farmers and agriculture industry. In November 2003, the State's seasonally adjusted unemployment rate was 7.2 percent. Washington's unemployment rate remains one of the highest in the nation, ranked as 38th. The state's unemployment rate was 5.5 percent (as of April 2005) compared to 5.4 percent nationally (February 2005). (3) /2007/Washington State's economy remains slow after the 2001 downturn. In March 2006, Washington's unemployment rate was 4.6 percent, which is comparable to the national unemployment rate of 4.7 percent (April 2006). Washington is ranked 30th among all the states for unemployment.//2007//

Several years of economic doldrums, combined with spending constraints and spending limits from voter-approved initiatives, have produced a continuing budget crisis for Washington. In the past, state revenue "surpluses" have been available to backfill revenue shortfalls faced by local governments. Continuing budget problems greatly reduce the state's capacity to subsidize local government revenue shortfalls, with the result that many local programs are struggling financially.

Economic hard times also increase the need for public health services, so the current decrease in funding is having a major impact on local public health. As the economic and state fiscal crisis continues, future reductions in local public health are expected. LHJs are currently being forced to reduce staff and programs.

//2007/Federal funding cuts and state general fund shortfalls continue, making it necessary to further reduce funding to state and local public health programs. //2007//

Population

Washington's population continues to grow. The 2000 Census indicated the state's population was 5,894,121, an increase of 21.1 percent since the 1990 Census.(4) The Washington Office of Financial Management's (OFM) preliminary intercensal population estimate for the state in 2004 was 6,167,800.(5)

//2007/ The population of Washington State more than doubled between 1960 and 2005. Fifty to seventy five percent of the growth is the result of net migration and the rest is from natural increase. OFM's preliminary intercensal population estimate for 2005 was 6,256,400.//2007//

In the early 1990s, Washington's population grew by over two percent per year, nearly twice the national rate. According to the 2000 Census, Washington ranked seventh in the country in numerical population growth and tenth in percentage population growth since 1990.(6)

However, from 1995-2000 growth slowed to an average of 1.3 percent per year and since 2000, has averaged 1.1 percent per year. Since 1995, natural population increase (births minus deaths) has remained fairly constant, while net migration (people moving into the state versus people moving out) has decreased from 68.3 in 1995 to an estimated 23.1 in 2003.(7) This decrease was most likely due to the strong national economy of 1990s and the increasingly poor economy in Washington in the past few years, resulting in fewer people looking for employment opportunities in Washington.(8)

//2007/ OFM is projecting a significant increase in the number of people migrating to Washington in the coming years.//2007//

Race/Ethnicity in Washington State

The majority of Washington's population identifies itself as White and non-Hispanic. In the 2000 Census, 81.8 percent of Washington's population reported its race as White, 5.5 percent Asian, 3.2 percent Black, 1.6 percent American Indian or Alaskan Native, 0.4 percent Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander, and 3.9 percent Other. Individuals who reported two or more races

accounted for 3.6 percent. Finally, 7.5 percent of the population reported Hispanic or Latino ethnicity.(9)

Although the majority of Washington's population remains White and non-Hispanic, the state's other race and ethnic minority populations increased rapidly in the last decade. Together, non-Whites and Hispanics in Washington increased from 13.2 percent of the overall population in 1990 to 21 percent (1,241,631) of the population in 2000. The state population of Asian/Pacific Islanders increased by 78 percent; Blacks by 35 percent; and American Indians, Alaska Natives, and Aleuts by 29 percent.

The Hispanic population in Washington State has more than doubled since the 1990 Census, from 214,570 in 1990, to 441,509 in 2000. Counties with large proportions of Hispanics tend to be located in rural areas of Eastern and Central Washington. In Adams County, the Hispanic population rose from 32.8 percent in 1990 to 47.1 percent in 2000; Franklin County saw an increase from 30.2 percent to 46.7 percent; and Yakima County saw an increase from 23.9 percent to 35.9 percent. While Hispanics make up a large proportion of the population in these counties, most Hispanics live in King, Pierce, and Snohomish counties. The majority (74.7 percent) of Hispanics in Washington are from Mexico, 20.6 percent are from "other countries" (Central and South America), 3.7 percent from Puerto Rico, and 1.0 percent from Cuba.(10) In 2000, there were approximately 289,000 migrant and seasonal farm workers and dependents living in Washington, most of whom were Hispanic. Migrant and seasonal farm workers are more likely to face language barriers, and to have low family incomes and limited transportation options. Most rely on Community and Migrant Health Centers (CMHC) for their health care.

Blacks and Asian/Pacific Islanders are predominantly located in urban areas west of the Cascades. Approximately 50 percent of each population resides in King County alone. There are also 29 federally recognized American Indian tribes throughout Washington with varying populations and land areas. Two additional tribes are seeking federal recognition.

Languages

According to the 2000 Census, approximately 15 percent, or 168,000, of Washington's children age 5-17 years speak a language other than English at home. Of these children, 43 percent speak Spanish, 29 percent speak Asian and Pacific Islander languages, 26 percent speak other Indo-European languages, and 4 percent speak other languages. A similar figure of 14 percent, or 512,000, of the adult population age 18-64 years does not speak English at home. Of those who do not speak English at home, 88 percent of the children and 75 percent of the adults speak English "very well" or "well." Twelve percent of the children and 25 percent of the adults, speak English "not well" or "not at all."(11)

Approximately 40,700 Spanish-speaking students were enrolled in the English as a Second Language program in Washington State for the 1999-2000 school year. Other languages with high enrollments were Russian (5,500), Vietnamese (3,200), Ukrainian (2,900), Korean (1,800), Cambodian (1,400), and Tagalog (1,000). (11)

Age

In 2003, there were 80,482 resident births in Washington State. The 2000 Census population counts show that almost 22 percent, or 1.29 million of the estimated 5.9 million people in Washington in 2000, were women of reproductive age (age 15-44 years). Nearly 29 percent, or 1.68 million, were children age 19 years and younger. There were over 125,000 women age 15 to 17 years. Adolescent pregnancy rates (age 15-17 years) declined in Washington from 57.9 per 1,000 women in 1990 to 28.8 per 1,000 women in 2003.(12) A State forecast predicts that over the next 30 years, as the children of baby boomers reach adulthood, the number of women of reproductive age will increase substantially. The school age population (age 5-17 years) is expected to remain stable through 2010 and then gradually increase. In 2004, there were an estimated 1,120,913 children and adolescents aged 5 to 17 years. (13)
/2007/In 2004 there were 81,715 resident births in Washington State.//2007//

Urban/Rural

Seventy-two percent of population growth over the past decade occurred in the western portion of the state, where the majority of the population lives. While there are many rural areas in Western Washington, the most rural counties are located in Eastern Washington. Rural county residents tend to have lower median household incomes, higher poverty rates, and higher unemployment rates. A recent review of health status indicators found some differences between the health status of rural and urban residents, though it is difficult to assess specifically whether the decreased health status is linked to rural location, isolation, or decreased access to care.(14)

Poverty and Health Insurance

According to the 2004 Washington State Population Survey, an estimated 24.5 percent of Washington households had a family income below 200 percent of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL), compared to 18.8 percent in 2002. An estimated 9.9 percent of households had an income below the 100 percent of the FPL.(15) Data on households with children is not yet available, but according to the 2002 Washington State Population Survey, an estimated 35 percent (approximately 574,000) of children in Washington were living below 200 percent of the FPL (FPL = \$18,392 for a family of four in 2002), compared to 33.4 percent in 2000. An estimated 18 percent (about 284,000) of the children were living below 100 percent of the FPL and 11 percent (about 180,000) were living at or below 50 percent of the FPL.(16)
/2007/ According to the 2004 Washington State Population Survey, an estimated 38 percent (approximately 640,985) of children in Washington were living below 200 percent of the FPL. An estimated 19 percent (about 322,188) of the children were living below 100 percent of the FPL and 10 percent (about 169,573) were living at or below 50 percent of the FPL.//2007//

Findings from the 2004 Washington State Population Survey indicate the percent of Washington residents without health insurance is also increasing. Among the general population, 8.4 percent were uninsured in 2002 compared to 9.8 percent in 2004, a 17 percent increase. The percent of

uninsured children increased approximately by 33 percent from 4.5 percent in 2002 to 6.0 percent in 2004, equaling over 98,000 uninsured children in Washington.(17)

The Washington State Medical Assistance Administration (MAA) funds health care services to low income people in Washington, primarily through the federal/state Medicaid partnership. In 2003, Medicaid covered pregnant women up to 185 percent of the FPL and paid for prenatal care and deliveries for approximately 46 percent of state births.(18) The "Take Charge" program at MAA provides family planning for men and women with incomes at or below 200 percent of the FPL. The State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) provides health coverage for children of families with incomes between 200 percent and 250 percent of the FPL.

/2007/ The Department of Social and Health Services Medical Assistance Administration (MAA) recently changed its name to DSHS Health and Recovery Services Administration (HRSA)./2007//

-
- (1) Washington State Office of Financial Management, US Census 2000 Maps
 - (2) Washington State Office of Financial Management, US Census 2000 Maps
 - (3) US Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, April 2005
 - (4) Washington State Office of Financial Management, Population Forecasting Division, Census 2000 results show Washington's population increased by over 1 million during the 1990s, 12/28/2000.
 - (5) Washington State Office of Financial Management, 2004 State Estimates.
 - (6) US Census Bureau, Census 2000 Redistricting Data (P.L. 94-171) Summary File and 1990 Census, 4/02/2001.
 - (7) Washington State Data Book 2003, Components of Population Change Table.
 - (8) Washington State Office of Financial Management, Population Forecasting Division, Washington's Population Growth Continues to Slow, 6/30/2000.
 - (9) US Census Bureau, Census 2000, Table DP-1, Profile of General Demographic Characteristics: 2000.
 - (10) 1990 and 2000 Census, Office of Financial Management.
 - (11) US Census Bureau, Census 2000 Supplementary Survey Summary Tables, Table PO35, Age by Language Spoken at Home by Ability to Speak English for the Population 5 Years and Over.

- (12) Washington State, Pregnancy and Induced Abortion Statistics 2003, Center for Health Statistics, March 2005.
- (13) Washington State Office of Financial Management, Forecast of the State Population by Age and Sex, 1990 to 2030, November 2004.
- (14) Schueler V, Stuart B. "Recent research and data on rural health in Washington State", Olympia, Washington, October 2000.
- (15) Office of Financial Management, 2004 Washington State Population Survey, December 2004.
- (16) Data provided by Washington's Office of Financial Management.
- (17) Gardner, Erica. "The Uninsured Population in Washington State", 2004 Washington State Population Survey Research Brief No. 31, Washington State Office of Financial Management, March 2005.
- (18) Cawthon, Laurie. "Characteristics of Washington State Medicaid Women Who Gave Birth", DSHS Research and Data Analysis, 2/23/2005.